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1.4 b and d.

IOM Seeks Registration

11. (SBU) Mahmoud Naderi, the Almaty-based Director of the International Organization for Migration who also is responsible for Uzbekistan, told us yesterday that the organization is moving ahead with plans to seek registration here (first reported in May). This would be welcome news, as it is awkward to try to explain why, with all the progress on TIP in the past year, IOM is not registered. Naderi conceded that IOM had thus far "not tried very hard," so their absence is not necessarily due to reluctance on the part of the Uzbeks. Nonetheless, Naderi noted that "one more IO in town means one more IO getting on their back." We can help by explaining to Uzbek officials that registering IOM will result in additional credibility for the country and not just more criticism.

The "Other" Elections

12. (C) The Tashkent-based representative of National Democratic Institute tells us Uzbek authorities are already gearing up for next December's parliamentary elections. These can be expected to feature the usual degree of advance "planning" required to ensure there are no surprise outcomes, but NDI also reports some significant emphasis being placed on preparing political party candidates and platforms for the electoral "campaign." Meanwhile, November 1 marks the kick-off date for leadership elections in Uzbekistan's nearly 10,000 mahallas - the traditional neighborhood committee structures that still play an important role in everyday Uzbek life. Mahalla "chairmen" (so-called "aksakals" or "white-beards", though young men and women also serve in this capacity) will be vetted and elected in November and December. The Ambassador met Oct. 30 with the chairman of the Mahalla Fund, Anwar Akhmedov (reftel), who explained that mahallas step in to help needy families, ensure municipal services are provided, and even intervene in divorce proceedings "in the interests of preserving the family." Akhmedov is hardly a "white beard" himself - he has visited the U.S. and was aware that mahallas fill a role that Americans may not quite understand.

New UN Resident Coordinator

13. (SBU) A new UN Resident Coordinator has taken up her duties as Head of the UN Development Program and simultaneously as the senior UN official in Uzbekistan. Anita Nirody, an Amcit, comes to Tashkent from two years as UNDP coordinator in Afghanistan. She takes over as senior UN official from Mahboob Sharif, who remains in Tashkent as

UNICEF chief. As with ambassadors, she will present credentials to President Karimov when a sufficient "batch" of other new ambassadors is ready. Her Afghan experience should come in handy in efforts to persuade Uzbekistan to enhance its role in Afghan reconstruction.

Interest in Counter-proliferation, Border Security Engagement

¶4. (C) The Ministry of Foreign Affairs hinted to us in mid-October that the Government of Uzbekistan is interested in further engagement with the State Department's Export Control and Related Border Security (EXBS) program. MFA followed up on this on October 28 with a positive response to our August proposal to resume cooperation between the U.S. Government and Government of Uzbekistan on commodity identification training on nuclear, chemical, biological, and missile-related equipment and materials. MFA also told Poloff on October 31 that a response to a proposal on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540 training would be forthcoming very soon. Post plans to propose further EXBS training activities related to International Border Interdiction Training, International Rail Interdiction Training, and radioisotope identification device training to the Government of Uzbekistan in the near future.

Drug Czar Moves On

¶5. (C) A representative from the European Union's Border Management in Central Asia (BOMCA) program told Poloff on October 30 that Uzbekistan's former drug czar Kamal Dusmetov has joined BOMCA, and will start on November 3 as a Senior National Expert working on integrated border management and trade issues.

Karimov Sponsors Contest to Help Banks Attract Deposits

¶6. (SBU) A commentary on Uzbekistan's underdeveloped banking system, President Karimov has sponsored a contest next year among banks to see which bank can increase its deposits by the greatest amount. The winning bank will receive a prize drawn from a fund that the banks themselves are required to pay into. Uzbeks don't trust banks, forcing the Government to go to great lengths in its efforts to expand bank capital through deposits. Although ridiculous, this measure is only the latest in a series, including a decree earlier this year lifting reporting requirements for cash deposits that has led Uzbekistan to run afoul of the FATF.

NORLAND